

Week Ending Friday, August 27, 2004

The President's Radio Address

August 21, 2004

Good morning. In the coming weeks, children across our Nation will begin a new school year. They're looking forward to meeting new teachers and learning new subjects and making new friends. And thanks to good schools and good policies, we can all be confident this year will be a year of achievement for America's students and families.

Two-and-a-half years ago, I signed the No Child Left Behind Act, a bipartisan law that is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations in public education. My budget for next year increases school funding to \$37 billion, a 49-percent increase since 2001. And we're insisting on results in return. We are leaving behind the broken system that shuffled children from grade to grade, even when they were not learning the basics. We're requiring regular testing, providing extra help for children falling behind. We're giving information and options to parents. We are holding schools accountable for the progress of every child.

We are already seeing hopeful results. Math scores are up from fourth and eighth grades across the country. Fourth graders in urban schools are showing strong gains in both reading and math. And from Georgia, North Carolina, and Maryland, to Illinois, Wisconsin, and New Mexico, minority children are improving test scores and narrowing the achievement gap.

We recognize that some schools have catching up to do. That is why we are making extra resources available to the schools that need the most help. We are empowering parents, getting local education experts involved, and offering tutors to striving students. And to help the most disadvantaged students, we have boosted Title I funding to an unprecedented \$12.3 billion, an increase of 41 percent since I took office.

One Federal grant went to Asheville City Schools in North Carolina, the home district of Ira B. Jones Elementary School. Two years ago, Jones did not meet standards under the new law. So district leaders used more than \$200,000 dollars in Federal aid to help Jones hire a reading coach, train additional teachers, increase parent involvement, and start an extended-day program for struggling students. This past school year, their efforts paid off. Jones met its target for yearly progress. This is how a fourth grade teacher described her reaction: "We screamed and yelled. We were absolutely thrilled."

We want to see that kind of achievement at schools around the Nation, both in the primary grades and in our high schools. So I'll work with Congress to pass my proposals to help high school students struggling in reading and math. We will expand Advanced Placement programs at low-income schools. We will ensure that high schools offer a rigorous curriculum in English, math, science, and social studies, so we can be certain a high school diploma means something. We will expand the use of the Internet to bring high-level training to students around the country.

These plans will build on the results we have seen these past 2 years. The pattern is clear and encouraging. The No Child Left Behind Act is bringing progress and hope to America's students, parents, and educators. We are gaining momentum, and we will not turn back.

By ensuring a quality education for every child, we meet an important duty to the next generation. We're giving young people the confidence and skills they need to succeed in higher education and to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Education is the gateway to a more hopeful future, and we will make sure that gate is open to all Americans.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:50 a.m. on August 20 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX,

for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference in Crawford, Texas

August 23, 2004

The President. Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming. General Myers, Vice President, and Condi and I just had a long-ranging discussion with our key members of the defense team about a variety of subjects. We talked about Iraq, the way forward in Iraq, the way to help the Iraqis get to elections. We're making progress on the ground. We were briefed not only by the Secretary and General Myers but as well by General Casey and General Abizaid via secure communications.

We talked about transformation issues. We spent some time talking about the reconfiguration of our forces around the world, to better be able to keep the peace. And Mr. Secretary, I thank you for your leadership on that issue. The Secretary did a great job of not only coming up with a strategy to enable America to better protect ourselves and friends and allies against the true threats of the 21st century, but he consulted with our allies in such a way that the response was very positive and I thought very good.

We talked about intelligence reform. We just talked about a variety of issues that are important for the security of the country. And I appreciate you coming, sir. Thank you for being here.

I'll answer some questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

2004 Election

Q. Some of your supporters are refighting the Vietnam war with their comments about Kerry's war record. Do you think that these attacks of this nature are unpatriotic, un-American, seeing as we're sending young people to war at this time?

The President. Yes. I think we ought to be debating who best to be leading this country in the war against terror. And that's what I'll continue to try to convince the American

people of, is that I'm the right person to continue to lead the country in the war on terror. I think we ought to be looking forward, not backward. And that's the kind of campaign I'll continue to run.

Swift Boat Veterans for Truth Ad/527 Campaign Ads

Q. But why won't you denounce the charges that your supporters are making against Kerry?

The President. I'm denouncing all the stuff being on TV of the 527s. That's what I've said. I said this kind of unregulated soft money is wrong for the process. And I asked Senator Kerry to join me in getting rid of all that kind of soft money, not only on TV but used for other purposes as well. I frankly thought we'd gotten rid of that when I signed the McCain-Feingold bill. I thought we were going to, once and for all, get rid of a system where people could just pour tons of money in and not be held to account for the advertising. And so I'm disappointed with all those kinds of ads.

Yes, Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters].

Kerry War Record/Leadership

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This doesn't have anything to do with other 527 ads. You've been accused of mounting a smear campaign. Do you think Senator Kerry lied about his war record?

The President. I think Senator Kerry served admirably, and he ought to be proud of his record. But the question is, who best to lead the country in the war on terror, who can handle the responsibilities of the Commander in Chief, who's got a clear vision of the risks that the country faces.

Yes.

527 Campaign Ads

Q. Mr. President, some Republicans such as Bob Dole and some Republican donors such as——

The President. What paper are you with?

Q. I'm with Bloomberg.

The President. Okay, good. First time I've seen you out here. Welcome.

Q. Thank you.